

--14 (amended). The knife of claim 13, wherein said back side includes (a) and not (b).

16 (amended). The knife of claim [15] 14, wherein said surface defined in (a) is semi-cylindrical.--

REMARKS

This is in response to the Office Action mailed January 7, 2002. Applicant acknowledges the allowance of claims 13 and 30, and the apparent allowability of claims 14 - 16 and claims 31 and 32 if rewritten to overcome the rejections under 35 USC §112.

Section 112 Rejections

Claims 14 - 23, 27, 29 and 31 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §112, second paragraph. Claims 14 and 16 have been amended and claims 15 and 18 - 23 have been cancelled. Applicant respectfully traverses the rejection of claims 27, 29 and 31.

The Examiner states that claims 27, 29 and 31 are "inaccurate" because the interlock does not "permit" rotation. Applicant respectfully submits that the claimed "interlocking features" can be "adapted to permit rotation." For example, Figures 4A and 4B show (a) an interlocking feature of the side of a knife (projection 32) and (b) a complementary interlocking feature of the surface of a clamp (recess 30 as referenced in Figure 1B). By comparing Figures 4A and 4B, it can be seen that the knife is permitted (or allowed) to pivot (or rotate about its elongate axis). That is, such rotation is possible.

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Moreover, such rotation is possible because of the shape of the interlocking features. For example, the interlocking features could alternatively be adapted to prevent rotation, such as where the feature (a) has a square shaped tip 27.

Section 102 Rejections

Claims 1 - 13, 18 - 21, 26 and 28 stand rejected under 35 USC §102(b) as being anticipated by Zaiser, U.S. Patent No. 6,131,627 ("Zaiser"). It is assumed that the Examiner did not intend to include claim 13 in the rejection, which is indicated as being allowed. Claims 1 - 13 and 18 - 21 have been cancelled. Applicant respectfully traverses the rejection of claims 26 and 28.

Claims 26 and 28 require two sets of interlocking features, one for the back side of the knife, and one for the front side of the knife. Zaiser does not teach or suggest the need for two sets of interlocking features, one for the back side of the knife and one for the front side of the knife.

Section 103 Rejections

Claims 22, 24 and 25 stand rejected under 35 USC §103 as being unpatentable over Zaiser in view of Sharp et al., U.S. Patent No. 5,469,902 ("Sharp"). Claims 22 and 24 have been cancelled.

Claim 25 recites a particular structure ("said projection having at least two sides that are substantially perpendicular to said inner surface, each connecting to a tip portion of said projection") which is distinguished over Zaiser and Sharp.

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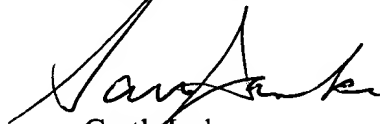
New Claims

New claim 32 clarifies the function of the claimed threaded aperture which distinguishes over both Zaiser and Sharp.

New claims 35 - 39 recite at least one deflector ridge projecting from the front side of the knife. Zaiser does not disclose such a knife, nor does Zaiser recognize a need for such a structure, which provides for alternative interlocking with the clamp to prevent the problem discussed in Applicant's specification in connection with Figure 3A.

For all of the foregoing reasons, it is respectfully submitted that claims 13, 14, 16, 17, 25 - 39 are in condition for allowance and the Examiner is respectfully requested to allow these claims and pass this case to issue.

Respectfully,



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